

Dial 7-1-1 for Telecommunications Relay Service

Background

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has implemented 7-1-1 for access to all Telecommunications Relay Services (TRS). TRS enables people with hearing or speech disabilities to communicate by telephone with people who may or may not have such disabilities. A TTY (text telephone - also known as a "telecommunications device for the deaf" (TDD)) user calls a voice telephone user through a TRS provider (or relay center), where a Communications Assistant (CA) places the call to the voice user, and then relays the conversation by transcribing spoken content for the TTY user and reading text aloud for the voice user. TRS works in reverse for a voice user calling a person with a hearing disability.

If you want to call someone who uses a TTY, pick up your phone, dial 7-1-1, and you're automatically connected to the TRS operator. If you're a TTY user traveling out of state and want to make a call, there is no longer a need to learn the state's TRS access code. Just dial 7-1-1. The 7-1-1 access code to TRS eliminates the difficulties that individuals have with finding or remembering various relay numbers as they travel from state to state. It's fast, functional and free.

The 7-1-1 code is not just for persons with disabilities. Both voice and TTY users will be able to initiate a call from any telephone, anywhere in the United States, without having to remember and dial a seven or ten-digit access number. For deaf, hard-of-hearing, and speech-disabled people who have been using TRS for years, the convenience of dialing three digits is obvious.

Dialing 7-1-1 From A Private Branch Exchange (PBX)

FCC rules require all common carriers, including wireline, wireless, and payphone providers that provide private branch exchange (PBX) to businesses and organizations, to implement three-digit 7-1-1 dialing for access to all TRS. A PBX is a private telephone system within an organization that switches calls between internal users and allows users to share a certain number of external phone lines. FCC rules and other rules on accessibility for telecommunications equipment also encourage all PBX suppliers to modify their systems for 7-1-1 access to TRS. Modifying PBXs to accommodate 7-1-1 dialing is essential to ensure that everyone benefits from this abbreviated dialing arrangement and to make it easier for consumers to access and use the relay services.

Callers from PBX locations may be required to dial 9 or another prefix before entering the 7-1-1 code. The prefix would also be needed for all other outside calls. The FCC encourages PBX operators to work with carriers and TRS providers to facilitate 7-1-1 dialing from their user locations.



Emergency Calling

Dialing 9-1-1 is the most familiar and effective way Americans have to finding help in an emergency. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires all Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) to provide direct, equal access to their services for people with disabilities who use TTYs. PBX systems that generally support 9-1-1 access to emergency services have the necessary programming to enable three-digit dialing to TRS centers.

If you find that you are unable to get 7-1-1 TRS access, please contact the FCC's Consumer Center at 1-888-CALL-FCC (voice) or 1-888-TELL-FCC (TTY). For more information on other disability issues, please visit the FCC's Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau's Web site at www.fcc.gov/cgb. Requests for written materials or alternate formats can be sent by mail to: The Federal Communications Commission, Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau, 445 12th Street, SW, Washington, DC 20554, or emailed to: fccinfo@fcc.gov or you can call the FCC's Consumer Center, 1-888-225-5322 (voice), 1-888-835-5322 (TTY), to place your request by phone.

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